

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY



SENATE JUDICIARY
Exhibit No. 5
Date 4-3-07
Bill No. HB 281 SUPPORT
LETTERS
FROM ELECTION
ADMINISTRATORS

ELECTION ADMINISTRATOR

(406) 256-2740
(406) 254-7940 (FAX)

dwinslow@co.yellowstone.mt.gov
P.O. Box 35002
Billings, MT 59107

March 13, 2007

Montana State Senate
State Administration Committee

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

Please accept this correspondence in support of HB 281. I am asking you to look at this issue in a non-partisan manner and help the Election Administrators in Montana continue to conduct elections with the highest level of accessibility while not sacrificing the integrity of these elections.

Over the past 14 years, as Election Administrator in Yellowstone County, I have worked hard with the Clerk and Records Association to make voting accessible for the voters of Montana. Over the years we have worked to make the "Motor Voter" laws function in a way that now ensures that Montana voters have no barriers to registration and removed the provision of purging voters after each Presidential election. We have also promoted or supported a long line of election laws that includes but is not limited to; making absentee voting more open by removing the need for "excuses", creating the permanent absentee list, allowing the verification of signatures for provisional voters, ensuring that all aspects of the HAVA legislation are met and most recently working to create the process known as late registration. (SB 302, in 2005) We have always worked on these laws with the two-fold approach of opening up the election process for the greatest number of voters without compromising the accuracy and integrity of the process.

Prior to late registration, if a voter missed the 30-day deadline to register, there simply was no opportunity for them to vote. With the implementation of the statewide database in 2006 we saw an opportunity to "open the door" of accessibility a bit wider and allow the voter who missed the deadline to come into the county election office, register and vote because we were able to ensure that the voter had not voted by absentee ballot anywhere else in the state of Montana. We saw this a very positive step for the voters of Montana. Unfortunately, when this law was created in 2005 there were a few major problems in it that were not fully anticipated.

The first problem is the loophole that is created when official registers are printed the weekend before the election and late registration continues after that time. Once a voter's name is printed on the official register this voter can then appear at the polling place and vote on Election Day. However, with late registration as it now exists, this same voter can appear at the county election office and vote as a late registrant. This creates the increased possibility of a voter voting twice. House Bill 281 solves this problem.

A second, and perhaps the most troubling problem, is the fact that with late registration it is impossible to provide proper supervision of the 500 election judges working at our 50 polling places. In this last election with late registration taking place on Election Day, over 37,000 voters at the polling places and more than 22,000 absentee ballots to be opened, verified and counted it caused our attention to be too divided to provide proper attention to the voters who had registered prior to Election Day. On Election Day it is not uncommon for our office to handle over 10,000 phone calls. Workers, who are highly trained in the election laws to ensure that the correct information is being provided, must handle these phone calls. However, with late registration taking place, these workers who would have been answering these phone calls, were required to be at the counter helping late registrants. The unfortunate fact was that many of these calls were simply not answered and at the polling places my election judges were forced to make decisions that they should not have had to make without assistance. In November, in House District 58, a race ended in a tie vote. Do we really want election judges, who are trained a few hours every two years, making critical decisions without assistance? Again HB 281 solves this problem.

A final problem that was not anticipated was the fact that in the upcoming Primary Election the county courthouses will be open for business while at the same time we are trying to run our elections. This past election I was able to use many county employees to help supervise at the polling places to minimize the fact that we would not be able to provide proper supervision, but in June of 2008, these employees will not be free to work on Election Day. In addition with the courthouse closed to other business on Election Day, we were able to use a large portion of the courthouse to process our absentee ballots, tabulate votes and handle the late registrants. We will not have that room available in the Primary Election. Moving the close of late registration back to Friday eliminates this problem.

In closing, this issue has become a partisan issue and it should not be viewed in this manner. I worked hard last session to help craft the legislation that implemented late registration and honestly think it is a very good thing. For me to be able to allow a voter to vote who had missed the deadline for registration is very gratifying, because that is what I care most about, allowing people to vote. However, if this right comes at the expense of the integrity of the process or if I am not able to ensure that the voters who vote on Election Day are given the attention they deserve, then I must defer to these concerns. Late registration on Election Day creates this situation. In addition, **EVERY** Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator in the state supports HB 281. This includes Democratic, Republican, Non-Partisan, Elected and Appointed officials. Also, this bill is supported by a great number of the County Commissioners in Montana. These officials saw first hand the negative effects of late registration on Election Day and acknowledge the great amount of good that will be accomplished by moving registration back a mere 17 voting hours. Please listen to those who are responsible for conducting elections and support HB 281. As Elected Officials, I hope you agree that the accuracy and integrity of elections are far too important to be compromised.

Sincerely,



Duane Winslow, Election Administrator
Yellowstone County

Rosebud County

P.O. Box 47

Forsyth, Montana 59327

Commissioners:

Gary D. Fjelstad
Daniel D. Watson
Danny Sioux

Clerk & Recorder:

Geraldine Custer

Treasurer:

Pam Shelton

Clerk of District Court:

Marilyn Hollister

Attorney:

Michael B. Hayworth

Superintendent of Schools:

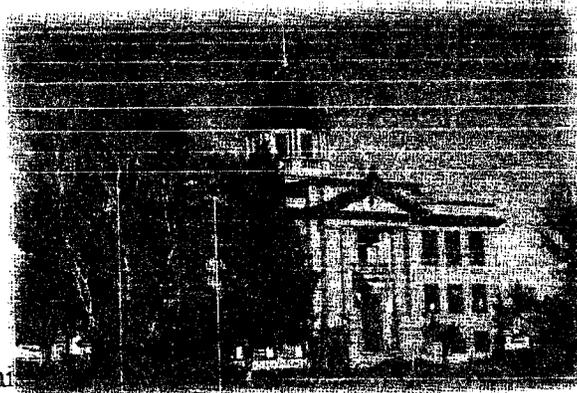
Sharyn Thomas

Justice of the Peace:

Mary O'Hara Kunst

Sheriff:

Randy Allies



March 9, 2006

Senate State Admin
Capitol Station
Helena, Mt. 59620

Dear Members of the Committee:

I am writing to ask your support of HB 281. The past election in November 2006 was a nightmare. My main concern about same day registration is the integrity of the election process. Same day registration allows a person to vote at their home precinct and then go to a neighboring county, go to the courthouse and show their ID, register, and vote. If the Clerk and Recorder is not up to speed and does not hold the ballot as a provisional, and check with the other county to see if the voter voted at the polls, the voter could vote twice. I had 50 electors come in on election day and of the 50, 20 were moves from county to county or in my county. I had to hold these ballots until the Monday after election, so I could look at my own registers that are in the polls and see if electors voted at the polls before I could count their ballots. The county to county voters I had to contact the previous county and have them look at the registers that were out in the polls before I could count their ballots.

The registration process and absentee process is time consuming and many of our offices have only room for so many computer terminals, so money is not the answer to the problem. The staff working on election day to do registration and absentee must know the Montana Votes System very well to do their job, so training and experience are necessary.

Moving the deadline back to Friday before the election would allow all of us to run our registers on the same day and the computer system would be accurate. We would have election day to support our poll workers and get the absentees processed.

Thank you for allowing me to express my support for HB 281.

Sincerely,

Geraldine Custer

As Missoula County's Election Administrator, I am torn over the philosophical issues and the administration of late registration on Election Day. I am sending you this memo so that you know how I feel about late registration on Election Day (House Bill 281).

I have always advocated that I want to make sure every eligible individual has the right to participate in an election. Also, I believe strongly that I have a responsibility to the electors of my county to insure that the integrity of the election is one of my highest priorities. Often these two philosophical issues are competing against each other when making laws and rules to administer the elections.

In 2005, I worked directly with Senator Ellingson on Senate Bill 302 which passed the law to allow late registration. I still advocate for late registration; however, I am opposed to late registration on Election Day. I would like to see that late registration be moved back to four days before the election. The reasons I have changed my position are for the following administrative duties that did not receive the attention required by law:

I have over 400 Election Judges working the polls on Election Day. Due to the line of late registrants, I was unable to give the judges any priority when they called with questions. That left my judges in the position to make decisions on their own. The judges work a maximum a 3 times per year and they cannot and should not have to handle the difficult questions without administrative support from me.

Electors who have been registered and have questions. These calls were not answered as quickly as they should have been because my key staff and I were registering late registrants to vote. We had temporary staff answering phones who often had to interrupt me to get the electors question answered.

Absentee ballots need to be processed; signatures approved, reconciled and ready to be counted. Again there are many times during the day where the judges have questions whether or not a ballot can be accepted and these decisions cannot be made without the input of myself or from trained staff.

Provisional Ballots require highly trained staff to advise so as to ensure that the voter knows to proceed as well as making sure that the voter is given proper information on how to resolve their ballot so that it could be counted. The needs of the late registrants at the front counter often kept me from being able to feel comfortable that this was being handled in the correct manner.

Lastly, preparing for the tabulating and accumulation of votes. We were unable to release any results until all late registrants had been processed and ballots cast. This resulted in the voters not receiving the results in the timely manner that they have become accustomed to.

Closing the Friday before the election allows us to print and assemble our registers (the official list of electors for the polling place) on Saturday and Sunday. On Monday, we need time to process the large number of absentee voters who need to vote before noon because they are unable to go to the polls on Tuesday. On Monday afternoon, we run supplemental registers and prepare supplies for delivery to the polling place. If the law

were changed to remove late registration from the day of election it would allow me to give the areas listed above the priority they deserve.

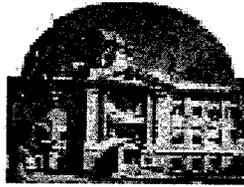
Missoula County registered 632 electors on Election Day. I understand the argument that those were 632 voters who would not have been able to cast a ballot if we did not have late registration. During the 29 days after the close of registration we had a total of 1165 late registrations processed (this number includes the 632 that registered on Election Day). The last week before the close of registration we registered 267 new voters. When these numbers are compared to those of the November 2004 Election, when we had a 30 day deadline for registering to vote, it shows that my office received 2673 new voter registration cards the last week before the close of registration. My analysis indicates that we did not increase voter participation or registration it was just done at a different time. Because of late registration, it appears that candidates and campaigns changed their emphasis of getting the voters registered before the close, and instead directed them to use the late registration process.

Lastly, I am extremely concerned for the upcoming Elections when the courthouse is not closed for business and I have a line of individuals who are registering to vote on Election Day and all of the issues I pointed out still need to be addressed. Many of my temporary staff that answered phone calls and processed absentee ballots on Election Day were county employees from other departments. I will not have that luxury during the Municipal and Primary Elections to use county employees because the courthouse is not closed and they will have to do their own job. This shortage of qualified, trained workers will only aggravate the problems that I outlined in the first part of this message. A nationwide problem with elections is finding enough workers to man the elections.

I understand this has become a partisan issue and I have been told by some of you that you will not support HB 281. I wanted you to hear from me what my concerns are on Election Day and ask that you reconsider your stand on late registration. The bill does not eliminate late registration it merely removes it from Election Day.

Thank you for listening to my concerns.

MAR 5 - 2007



COUNTY OF RICHLAND

Office Of

CLERK & RECORDER

201 West Main -Sidney, Montana 59270

406-433-1708 FAX 406-433-3731

Clerk & Recorder
Penni D. Lewis

Chief Deputy Clerk & Recorder
Yvonne Volkman

3/2/2007

Members of the Committee
Senate State Administration Committee

Dear Members of the Senate State Administration Committee:

I support HB 281 because it will protect the integrity of elections in Montana.

By moving late registration back by 17 voting hours, it will allow Election Administrators to run their registers for polling places over the weekend. This would make it so that the registers at the polls would be accurate and they would include only those voters eligible to vote at the polls on election day. This would eliminate ballots that are considered provisional until the other county can be contacted to verify that the person did not vote at the polls in their county and by late registration in our county. When candidates and the public like to have the results of who won the election as soon as possible, opening and counting the provisional ballots can back the results up until the week after the election. This can make a big difference in a close race!

This should not be a partisan issue. When 56 Clerk & Recorders and/or Election Administrators in the State of Montana, who are not all affiliated with the same party, but all believe in elections being as accessible as possible while still maintaining the integrity of the process, are all in favor of moving the close of late registration back to Friday at 5:00 p.m., it becomes an issue of doing what is right.

With permanent absentee, no-reason absentee voting, and the closing of late registration at 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the election, we would still have some of the most open voting laws in the United States. Montana voters need to take some responsibility for themselves and make sure they are registered before election day!

Please vote yes for HB 281.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Penni D. Lewis". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Penni D. Lewis

Richland County Clerk & Recorder/Election Administrator

MAR 5 - 2007

**Park County
Clerk & Recorder**

Memo

To: Members of the Committee
Senate State Administration Committee

From: Clerk & Recorder/Election Administrator/Surveyor

Date: 3/1/2007

Re: HB 281

I am asking you to support HB 281 which would move the late registration date to 5 p.m. the Friday before the election. Being part of the election process is an honor. To have the responsibility of the public trust to run a fair and accurate election has always been something to take pride and pleasure in being part of.

Providing an option of late registration and being able to vote in the election office went well, especially for the first time it was available, and having no way of knowing exactly what to expect and plan for -- until Election Day, when it became nothing less than chaos.

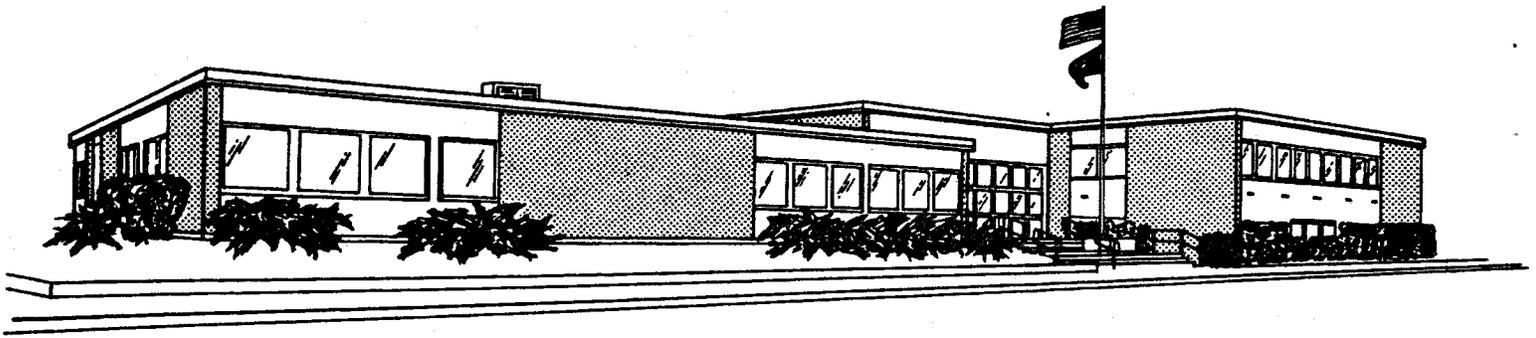
We are not able to hire additional staffing to have help in registering new voters and distributing ballots to them because of the training necessary to run the MT Votes Program and we do not have the necessary equipment, such as computers and printers. We were not able to answer all of the incoming calls from the judges at the polls with questions or needing to verify identification of a voter at the polling place. Temporary help can not be trained to be completely knowledgeable with all election laws in order to answer the question or run the MT Votes program and to verify a voter's ID...

The process to confirm that a voter had not voted in another county or in their previous precinct in our county is not an efficient process at all. We have to email lists of the late provisional voters to the other counties and them to us, so we can pull all the official registers from all the precincts and start the process of looking through registers checking that they had not already voted. We only have a little over 11,000 voters here but it was quite a process. I can not say that it is an accurate verification process.

I strongly feel the integrity of the election is severely jeopardized by running late registration on Election Day. If it closed on the Friday before, we would be able to print the official registers the week end before the election and send accurate registers to the polls that do not list voters that will be voting in another county. For the next Primary Election if late registration is still being done the day of the election we will be trying to record deeds and other documents from the title companies, helping customers with research, provide birth & death certificates, answering calls from the public and the poll judges and running a polling place in this office as well. The space is limited and so is the man power.

There are deadlines for the people who run for our public offices so we are able to prepare ballots. We need to have a reasonable deadline for us to prepare the official registers, get the ballots and supplies to the polls and provide service to the polls and the voters at the polls.

Denise Nelson
Clerk & Recorder / Election Admin



Office of:
County Commissioners
Phone 377-3562
James Skillestad, Chairman
Adam J. Gartner
William E. LaBree

County of Dawson
207 W. Bell
Glendive, MT 59330

Office of:
Clerk and Recorder
Phone 377-3058
Maurine Lenhardt

Office of:
County Treasurer
Phone 377-3026
Vickie Boje

March 1, 2007

Senate State Administration Committee Members
Montana State Capitol
Helena, Montana

Dear Committee Members:

As Dawson County Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator I have worked elections in Dawson County since 1993. I have always tried to conduct each election with the utmost integrity and accuracy. The November 2006 election was a challenge and as a result the poll workers suffered, as I was unable to provide the time needed due to the influx of late registrants. This may be a larger problem during the primary when all county offices are open for business.

Therefore, I am encouraging members to pass House Bill 281 out of committee. This will allow me to print accurate official registers on Saturday and Sunday and prepare election supplies for pickup by poll workers on Monday.

House Bill 281 is not proposing to eliminate late registration, merely rolling it back seventeen voting hours. The Montana Association of Clerk and Recorders unanimously supports this bill, as it will maintain accuracy on Election Day.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Maurine Lenhardt
Dawson County Clerk and Recorder
Dawson County Election Administrator



MAR 6 - 2007

CARBON COUNTY
OFFICE OF THE ELECTION ADMINISTRATOR
PO BOX 887
RED LODGE, MT 59068
PHONE: (406) 446-1220
FAX: (406) 446-2640
EMAIL: elections@co.carbon.mt.us

March 5, 2007

Members of Senate State Administration Committee:

I am writing to request that you give serious consideration to House Bill 281. As Election Administrator from Carbon County, I want to give voters every opportunity to utilize their right to vote while insuring that we protect the integrity of the election process. Closing late registration at 5 pm on the Friday before an election would allow members of my team to verify addresses and to insure that no one inadvertently is allowed to vote more than once. This would also give us the opportunity to work through the weekend to see that our election judges in the polling places have the most up-to-date information avoiding confusion and making sure that every vote is counted. We are committed to the right to vote for every person. We are further dedicated to maintaining the honesty and integrity of the election process and feel that House Bill 281 will allow for both of these values. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sally Rodibaugh".

Sally Rodibaugh,
Election Administrator

MAR 6 - 2007

County of Carbon

17 West 11th Street/PO Box 887
Red Lodge, Montana 59068

phone: 406-446-1220

Fax: 406-446-2640

March 5, 2007

Members of the Senate State Administration Committee:

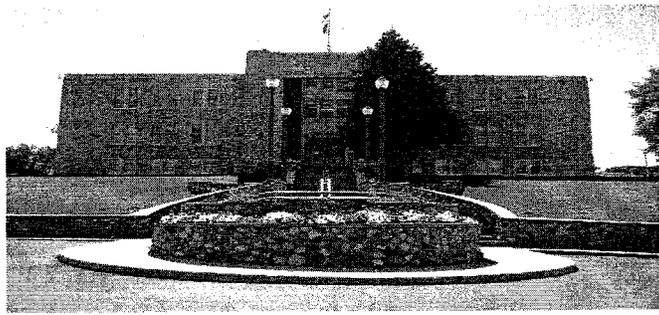
I am writing to request that you give serious consideration to House Bill 281. As Clerk and Recorder from Carbon County, I want to give voters every opportunity to utilize their right to vote while insuring that we protect the integrity of the election process. Closing late registration at 5 pm on Friday would allow members of myteam to verify addresses and to insure that no one inadvertently is allowed to vote more than once. This would also give us the opportunity to work through the weekend to see that our election judges in the polling places have the most up-to-date information avoiding confusion and making sure that every vote is counted. I am committed to the right to vote for every person. Further I am dedicated to maintaining the honesty and integrity of the election process and feel that House Bill 281 will allow for both of these values. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



Linda Ladvala,
Carbon County Clerk and Recorder

Ben Ober,
Commission Chairman
Allan Underdal,
Commissioner
Dave Miller,
Commissioner
Merle Raph,
County Attorney
Donna Matoon,
Sheriff
Dan B. Whitted,
Coroner
Commissioners Office
406-424-8310
Fax #406-424-8301



Mary Ann Harwood,
Clerk & Recorder
Sandra Peers,
Clerk of Court
Boyd Jackson,
Treasurer/Assessor
Supt. Of Schools
Helen I. Schnee,
Public Administrator
Russ Mann,
Justice of the Peace
Clerk & Recorders
Office #406-424-8300
Email address:
tcclerk@3rivers.net

COUNTY OF TOOLE

226 1ST Street South
Toole County Courthouse, Shelby, MT 59474

MAR 6 - 2007

Members of the Committee
State Senate Administration Committee

RE: HB281

I am writing to beg you to please pass HB281. As the Clerk & Recorder/Election Administrator of Toole County, I feel that the integrity of the election process would be diminished if voters are allowed to register and vote on Election Day. All of us in Montana who work with elections highly regard our duties and work very hard to make sure everything is done right and at the most convenience to our voters.

I felt that in the last General Election, I could not give my utmost to the voters, the judges at the election polls and to the general public because of the election day registration. I was very nervous as to whether these voters had or would vote again the same day. I do not think that this should ever have to cross our minds. We do our jobs with confidence and this is not possible with same day voter registration.

This would benefit everyone to pass HB281...the voters would regain their responsibility to get registered on a timely basis, the integrity of the election process would remain and the candidates could receive the results much sooner.

Thank you for considering this and the passage of HB281, Montana will not have to worry about being in the media because of bad election laws.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Harwood
Toole County Clerk & Recorder



**REGINA PLETTENBERG
ELECTION ADMINISTRATOR
215 SOUTH 4TH STREET, SUITE C
HAMILTON, MT 59840
PHONE (406) 375-6550 • FAX (406) 375-6554**

March 1, 2007

Dear Members of the Senate State Administration Committee:

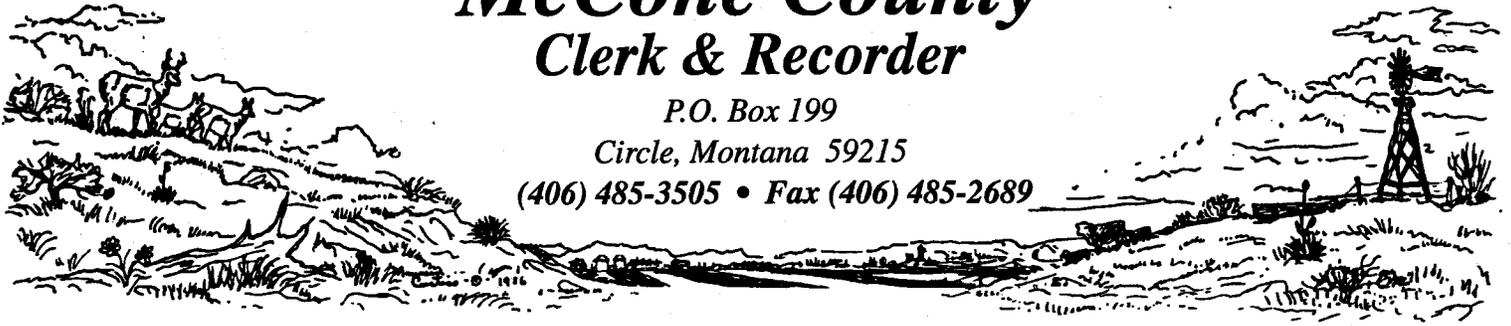
I would like to ask for your support of HB 281. This bill would close late registration the Friday before the election. Late registration was a real hardship for all of the election offices around the state, from the largest to the smallest. This is due to all of the unknowns surrounding late registration on election day – how many will show up, insuring that double voting is not occurring in our county, or multiple counties for that matter throughout the state on election day, and how do you staff for it. Late registration requires staff trained on the Montana Votes software and absentee procedures so it difficult to bring in our regular judges for this kind of work when we really need our office staff, which gets spread very, very thin (especially when our office is open during the Primary elections for other business) **and that's when mistakes happen**. I am not against late registration and I do not want to get rid of it, I am just asking that it be rolled back 17 voting hours to allow me, my staff and my election judges the TIME we need to insure everything is done accurately!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Regina Plettenberg". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Regina Plettenberg,
Election Administrator



McCone County Clerk & Recorder

P.O. Box 199

Circle, Montana 59215

(406) 485-3505 • Fax (406) 485-2689

March 1st, 2007

Members of the Committee
Senate State Administration Committee
Helena, MT 59620

RE: HB 281

Dear Members,

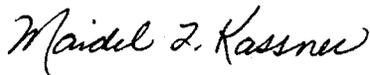
McCone County is one of the smaller counties in the State of Montana. I have to question the integrity of same day registration and voting even with our smaller voter count.

What would happen when one of you as Senators forgot to vote at noon on Monday before election? You would not be able to vote at the polls on Election Day because you will be absent from the county. You are unable to vote because the law states that voting absentee for registered voters closes at noon the day before election. However, someone just moving into McCone County could come in and register to vote and vote on the same day. The Senator who has been registered for years and never missed an election will not be able to vote. How would this make you feel?

I have always taken pride in running an election. I love the challenges that come with being an Election Administrator. Allowing the rolling back of 17 voting hours in House Bill 281 is not a partisan issue. It is the common belief of elections maintaining the integrity of the process and doing what is right.

Thank you for consideration in support of House Bill 281.

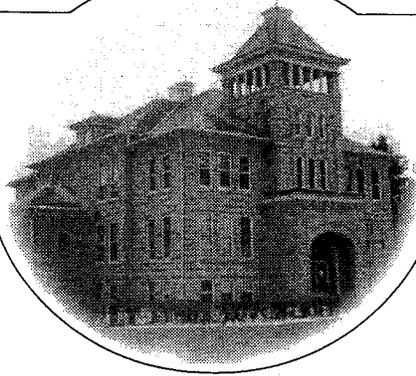
Sincerely,



Maridel L. Kassner
Clerk & Recorder/Election Administrator

TETON COUNTY

MONTANA



PAULA J. JACONETTY
TETON COUNTY CLERK & RECORDER/
ELECTION ADMINISTRATOR
P.O. Box 610 • Choteau, MT 59422 • paula@3rivers.net

Office: (406) 466-2693 • Fax: (406) 466-3244

March 1, 2007

Members of the Committee
Senate State Administration Committee:

H 281 will allow unregistered voters or voters that did not change their voting information before the close of regular registration to register up until 5:00 p.m. the Friday before an election at their county election administrator's office. This only shortens the time to register by 17 voting hours. The Clerk & Recorders/Election Administrators in all 56 counties support HB 281.

All election staff agree that we would like for everyone to vote and we support late registration, but registering new voters on Election Day has proven to be a problem in every county across Montana.

With HB 281 moving back late registration to the Friday before each election, the precinct registers would be printed over the weekend so that the registers would be accurate with every name of who may cast a vote in that precinct. Having the late registration open until 8:00 p.m. the night of election does not allow enough time to verify that the voter had not cast a vote in another precinct or county, thus making more provisional voters until the voter could be verified.

Moving the close of late registration to the Friday before the election will ensure the integrity of the election process, voter turnout will not be affected, and every elector will get one vote.

Montana is known for keeping extremely high standards for our election process and all election administrators want to keep this reputation.

Please vote in favor of HB 281 enabling Montana to maintain the reputation for our great election process.

Sincerely,

Paula J. Jaconetty

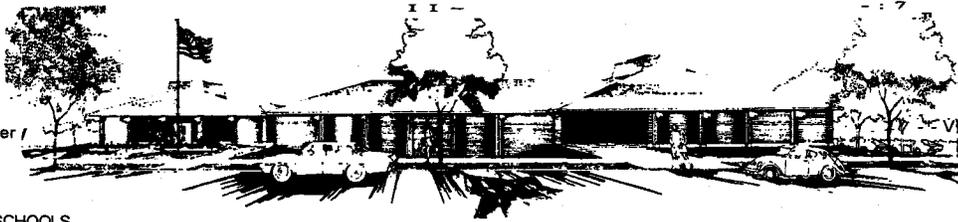
Teton County Clerk & Recorder/Election Administrator

COMMISSIONERS
Box 846 - Phone 778-7107
Deb Ranum, Chairperson, Baker
Dennis Afrank, Baker
Donald Rieger, Ismay

CLERK & RECORDER/SUPT OF SCHOOLS
Brenda J. Wood
Box 846 - Phone 778-7106

COUNTY ATTORNEY
Albert R. (Rich) Batterman
Box 1075- Phone 778-3006

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
Anna K. Straub
Box 846 - Phone 778-7128



FALLON COUNTY

BAKER, MONTANA 59313

CLERK OF COURT
Jeraldine Newell
Box 1521 Phone 778-7114

SHERIFF/CORONER
Tim Barkley
Box 899 - Phone 778-2879

TREASURER/ASSESSOR
Faye M. Koenig
Box 787 - Phone 778-7109

March 5, 2007

Members of the Committee Senate State Administration Committee

I am the Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator for Fallon County. I am in total support of HB281, as are our election judges, our entire office staff and our County Commission. I feel there needs to be a definite deadline, as with everything else in our lives. The public has known all these years, if they do not register 30 days prior to an election, they do not vote in that election. NO ONE has ever blamed anyone or been so upset that they wanted to come across the counter at us for them missing the deadline. We are all adults; we know that with everything, there is usually a deadline, especially for important items of this nature.

It is crucial for our office to have the time to make sure these people are eligible and be allowed to run a register that allows our office and the election judges to FIND that name, if they are deemed eligible.

I would hope that you could find it in your heart to understand the difficulty we face every election when we have to look for election judges. With every new law or change of a law, you will find at least one or more election judges that decide it is just too difficult to manage all the changes therefore call and resign their position. What more are we going to throw at our election judges for a minimal amount of pay?

I fully understand giving everyone the opportunity to vote. Everyone still has the opportunity to vote, they just have a deadline which allows them 26 more days to register to vote than the previous 30 day cutoff.

I also do not feel that our staff should be made to stay in a Courthouse alone, in which they are the only ones available to the public and made to monitor and police occurrences which may happen beyond their control.

Our office is very busy, not only for elections, but for all other aspects, as we are the hub of the County. Our County does not have a separate election department, we all have other duties to perform, wait on customers and meet other deadlines as necessary. Stress and hard work is an everyday occurrence and shirking our duties does not come into play.

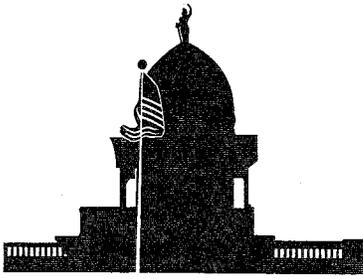
I have a very competent staff; I trust them with my life. We have to meet all of the Governmental deadlines thrown to us through the election process to make it a success, why should it be so difficult for the public to also meet one small deadline to contribute to the success of all elections?

Please pass HB281 and make the voter responsible for themselves.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda J. Wood".

Brenda J. Wood
Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator



CLERK AND RECORDER/AUDITOR

121 4th Street North Suite 1B-1

P O Box 2867

Great Falls, MT 59403

Phone (406) 454-6800

Fax (406) 454-6703

CASCADE COUNTY

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Rina Fontana Moore and I am the Clerk & Recorder/Auditor/Surveyor for Cascade County.

I am a Democrat and have worked tirelessly on hundreds of campaigns for 35 years. We all agree that we would like for everyone to vote and agree with late registration, however mixing Election Day with registering voters, proved to be problematic and chaotic in every county across the State of Montana.

Please keep in mind that during our last general election and all of the chaos, the government offices were on a holiday. We now look forward to our next large primary and see the problems of the past being complicated by all government employees being underfoot. We are trying to avoid the inevitable train wreck and we believe that closing late registration at 5:00 pm on the Friday before Election Day is the solution. 5:00 pm on the Friday before the election is in fact late registration, a late registration that will not compromise the integrity of the election process.

All 56 counties along with the Secretary of States Office are in support of HB 281. We want to ensure the integrity of the election process, we do not believe that voter turnout will be adversely affected and we want to ensure that every elector gets only one vote.

It is now your duty, as the delegates that we elected, to listen to the people that were actually in the trenches and witnessed first hand the many problems that occurred, and with that the solution that we are so adamantly seeking, that being support for HB 281. Please keep in mind that we are asking for your support unanimously, 56 counties, Democrats & Republicans alike.

Thank you,

Rina Fontana Moore

Rina Fontana Moore

Cascade County

Clerk & Recorder/Auditor/Surveyor

My name is Debbie Mart. I am the Election Supervisor in Cascade County. I have worked in the Election office for over 12 years and have been the supervisor for the past 3 years. I am writing to request your support of HB 281. This bill will not end late registration, nor would I want to see that happen. All this bill will do is move the deadline for late registration back to the Friday before each election, a mere 17 voting hours. This entire issue boils down to just how much integrity we expect in the election process in the state of Montana.

With electors being allowed to register and vote on Election Day, this opens up the process to voter fraud. A couple of examples:

1. A person is registered in Choteau County and appears in person in Cascade County to register and vote. Cascade County issues a provisional ballot to the elector. This person also goes to the polls in Choteau County; however the election judge (who works for minimum wage and works a couple of times per year, at the most) didn't see that the elector signed the official register in the wrong spot. When Cascade County calls Choteau County to verify that the elector did not vote at the polls, Choteau County does not see a signature in the register, so Cascade County counts the provisional ballot. This person just voted twice.

2. A person is registered in Choteau County and appears in person in Cascade County to register and vote. A clerk in Cascade County miss reads the date of birth and doesn't catch the fact that this person is currently registered in Choteau County, so a regular ballot is issued. No provisional ballot is issued so this person just voted twice.

As you can see by these two examples, it is not a big stretch of the imagination to see that this could happen without anyone being aware. Human error is going to happen, however by closing late registration on the Friday before the election, this would allow every County to print their official registers on the weekend before the election so that every name in the register is ONLY allowed to vote at that particular polling place.

The total number of electors that registered and voted in the state on November 7, 2006, was almost 4,000. This number is not the number of NEWLY registered voters as it includes those voters that moved between Montana Counties and within the same County. The electors that moved between Counties or within the same County could have voted by absentee ballot or gone to their old polling location.

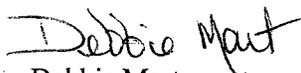
Although there are a few states that have late or same day registration, the vast majority of them do not. I believe that they feel the same as we do, that just opening up the *possibility* of voter fraud is too big of a sacrifice to make.

I honestly believe that it is human nature to procrastinate and if we were still allowing people to register and vote for the last election, we would still see people lining up. The right to vote comes with responsibilities and I feel that part of an elector's responsibility is to make sure that they are registered prior to Election Day.

I feel that each and every person working in election offices across the state put their hearts and souls into each and every election. We would love to see a 100% turnout for every election; however we also feel very strongly that no vote should count more than any other vote. Allowing late registration to take place on Election Day, we can not feel confident that each elector is getting only one vote.

The Secretary of State as well as all 56 County Election administrators support this bill. We all believe that with the passage of this bill, we will be able to ensure the integrity of the election process, ensure that every elector will get only one vote, and that voter turnout will not be adversely affected.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.



Debbie Mart

Cascade County Election Supervisor

elections@co.cascade.mt.us

PO Box 2305

Great Falls, MT 59403

(406) 454-6803

**CARTER COUNTY CLERK AND RECORDER
PO BOX 315 *** 214 PARK STREET
EKALAKA, MONTANA 59324**

PHONE (406) 775-8749

FAX (406) 775-8750

March 2, 2007

TO: Members of the Senate State Administration Committee

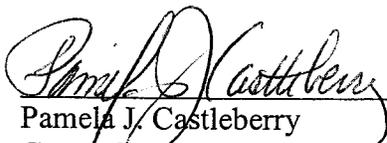
RE: HB No. 281

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter requesting your support for HB 281. As I am sure you are aware, this bill comes as a request from the fifty-six Clerks and Recorders and Election Administrators from across the State of Montana. Please know that this group is united in its effort to see this bill pass. I cannot offer you any better resource to speak on behalf of this bill but those individuals who have been administering elections in Montana since 1889.

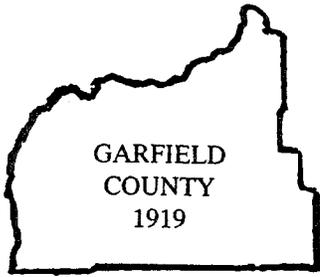
First understand, it is not the flavor of this bill to eliminate late registration, simply, the bill rolls back registration by a mere 17 hours. I personally believe these 17 golden hours will allow election administrators and Clerks and Recorders time to make verifications, and perform all other necessary functions in a timely manner. My county experienced just 3 or 4 late registrants, I'm aware of other counties who received many more. I appreciate the consideration of this bill, elections are a very important part of our jobs, there is no margin for error.

Also, please know that as recent Past President of the Montana Association of Clerk and Recorders and Election Administrators, we support the bill as a whole, I did not detect any splits due to this being a partisan issue. The bill makes good sense. Please give it consideration.

Sincerely,



Pamela J. Castleberry
Carter County Clerk and Recorder



**Clerk & Recorder
Garfield County**

P.O. Box 7
Jordan, Montana 59337

Phone: (406) 557-2760

Fax: (406) 557-~~2567~~
2765

March 6th, 2007

Members of the Committee
Senate State Administration Committee

I am not requesting the elimination of late registration, just to roll it back to the Friday before Election Day. Closing registration on the Friday before Election Day will allow us to run accurate registers for our polling places. There will be time to review and make all necessary corrections before sending them out to the polling places, this leaves less chance for errors. And finally, in all fairness to all of our current registered voters, please support HB281.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet Sherer".

Janet Sherer
Garfield County Clerk & Recorder/Election Administrator

Accounting Techs

Tracy Reum, Deputy
406-653-6253

Kasey Garrett
406-653-6233

County of Roosevelt



Clerks

Sonja Friesen-Deputy
406-653-6252

Jan Pankratz
406-653-6250

Fax Line
406-653-6289

Cheryl A. Hansen, Clerk & Recorder

400 2nd Avenue South
Wolf Point, MT 59201
406-653-6229

E-mail: chansen@rooseveltcountry.org

March 5, 2007

Montana Senators
PO Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Re: House Bill #281
Closing Late Registration at 5:00 p.m. Friday before the election.

Dear Senate Committee Members:

I am writing this letter to ask for your support on House Bill 281.

When the Clerks and Election Administrators were in Helena in February, we were asked what we needed to make late registration work. The number one answer was time. We are asking for 17 hours. This will allow us to run the official registers for the polling places over the weekend making them more accurate and including only those voters eligible to vote at the polls on Election Day.

Give us the time on Election Day to be there for our Poll Managers and Election Judges out in the field; when they need a question answered or help with a voter. I had voice mail messages on my phone that never got answered. I feel that these people should not have to make election administrator decisions on Election Day; that's my job. If this continues, we may have to combine polling places, which will not make it easier on the voter.

Moving late registration back 17 hours will bring integrity, accuracy and honesty back to the election process in Montana.

Montana has become a front runner for HAVA implementation. We are being watched by many different groups nationally and locally. Let's not in the 2008 Presidential elections become another Florida.

Thanks for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely yours,



Cheryl A. Hansen
Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator
Roosevelt County

TREASURE COUNTY

COMMISSIONERS:
Norris "Mack" Cole, Chairman
Doug Hollowell
Marlo Moehr

RUTH L. BAKER
CLERK & RECORDER
P.O. Box 392
Hysham, MT 59038

Phone: 406-342-5547
Fax: 406-342-5445

March 5, 2007

Members of the Committee
State Senate Administration Committee

Committee Members,

The Treasure County Office of Elections would like to encourage your support of HB 281. Those of us who work elections would like to continue to fulfill our duties with the accuracy and integrity Montana's population has come to expect. Same Day Voter Registration has created a situation where the Elections office has to take-on one more task on Election Day, which takes attention away from the actual process of Elections. This leaves room for error and we could lose the accuracy and integrity Montana deserves. If we continue the Late Registration, but have it close at 5:00 P.M. on the Friday prior to the Election, this office would be able to turn its full attention to the Election on Election Day and continue with the kind of election Montana is known for conducting; accurate with integrity.

Please vote yes on HB 281 to allow Montana to continue having elections with accuracy and integrity. Thank you.

TREASURE COUNTY ELECTIONS



Ruth L. Baker, Clerk & Recorder/Clerk of Court/Election Administrator



Sharon DeCock, Deputy Clerk & Recorder/Deputy Election Administrator



Established 1915

March 8, 2007

Lisa Kimmet clerkrecorder@prairie.mt.gov

Clerk & Recorder and Clerk of District Court

PO Box 125, Terry, MT 59349-0125

Phone 406-635-5575 Fax 406-635-5576

MAR 8 - 2007

Montana State Senate
State Administration Committee
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

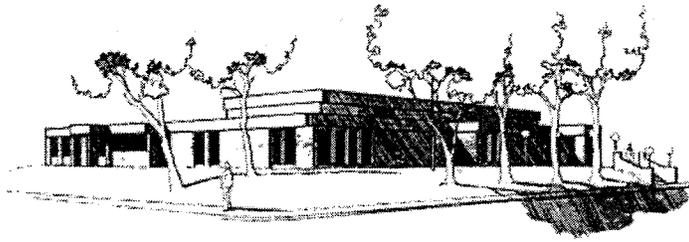
As Clerk and Recorder and Election Administrator for Prairie County, I would like to request your support of House Bill 281. The problems small counties encountered with election day registration and voting differed somewhat from what the larger counties experienced. Small counties experienced problems with having enough resources to monitor the polling places, while maintaining voter registration and voting at the courthouse. On a typical election day, I am at the courthouse at 6:00 a.m. and am here until late at night or early morning. I spend most of the day visiting my polling places, assisting with provisional voting at the polling places and assisting the precinct counting boards that report at 5:00 p.m. If a polling place worker or a counting judge has an emergency and cannot work on election day, I will fill in for them. Up until the general election in 2006, my office has not been open to the public on general election day. My deputy election administrator and I could each go to a different polling place to monitor and assist the precinct judges, or one of us could go, and one stay in the office to answer phone calls. However, with the election office open on election day, one of us was required to stay at the office from 7:00 a.m. until the polls closed at 8:00 p.m. I was uncomfortable leaving my deputy by herself, and being by myself in the courthouse with the doors open and no one else around. I felt this was a security risk for myself and my staff.

I believe that with a concerted effort by the election administrators and the political parties in Montana, we can get every person who wants to vote registered by the Friday before the election. Election administrators are not afraid of extra effort and extra work, and I am willing to put forth that extra effort in order to preserve and protect each voter's rights and preserve and protect the integrity of election day in Montana.

Thank you for your consideration of support for House Bill 281.

Sincerely, *J*

Lisa Kimmet, Clerk and Recorder and Election Administrator
Prairie County



Valley County

501 Court Square
Glasgow, Montana 59230

Phone: (406) 228-8221
FAX: (406) 228-9027

The Valley County Election office requests that you vote yes for HB 281. Late registration gives the voters an extra opportunity to vote. Voters already have the opportunity of permanent absentee voting and no-excuse absentee voting. We need to end late registration on Friday before the election day. This gives the election office time to run registers and prepare for the election. It gives election offices the time to perform check and balances to be accurate. Accuracy is a must for our candidates and our voters. Also, integrity becomes an issue with same day registration. Voters could possibly vote at a poll and also late register and vote again. One problem with smaller counties is there maybe only one same day registered voter in a given precinct. That ballot becomes a provisional ballot which may not become a regular ballot until the next day. People would know the results of that provisional vote. Once again, we're not against late registration, just not registration and same day voting together. Thank you for taking time to hear my concerns. Lynne Nyquist, Valley County Election Administrator.

Granite County Clerk and Recorder

Blanche McLure

P.O. Box 925

Philipsburg, Montana 59858

Phone: (406) 859-3771

Fax:

(406) 859-3817

To Whom It May Concern:

Granite County supports HB 281!

As Election Administrator for Granite County I want to stress the importance of integrity in the voting process. If we can roll back the last day to register to vote to the Friday before the election it will give us time to get the registers and voting materials ready for the election on Tuesday.

We do want everyone to be able to vote and we have always made sure that the elector was informed as early as possible so that there would be no last second rush to the polls.

The Absentee voting has been made easier for the person who can't go to the Polls on Election Day.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Blanche McLure

Clerk and Recorder, Granite County

Stillwater County

P.O. Box 149 Columbus, MT 59019 400 3rd Avenue North Columbus, MT 59019
Phone: (406) 322-8000 Fax: (406) 322-8007 E-mail: pmishler@co.stillwater.mt.us

Pauline M. Mishler
Clerk and Recorder

March 5, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

It is the feeling of this Clerk & Recorder that the support and passage of HB 281 is crucial to the integrity, accuracy and safety of all future elections.

We are concerned that Same/Late Day Registration discriminates against the loyal, dedicated voters who, after noon the day before the election, can no longer get an absentee ballot, or who can not vote if they are for some reason unable to get to the polls before closing. The unregistered voter, however, can for any reason come to this office and register and vote until the polls close. How does this give every voter the same opportunity?

We are concerned that Same/Late Day Registration contributes to the already questionable (in some minds) accuracy and integrity of the elections. We are not able to produce accurate voter registers for our election judges. We are not able to accurately judge the amount of ballots needed to assure an ample supply. We are not able to assure that once a new voter has voted in our office that he/she does not go to another county/precinct and vote again. We are not able to effectively assist voters and poll workers with questions and concerns.

We are concerned with the safety of the election staff and election materials in the office. The entire courthouse is required to be open on Election Day in order for Same/Late Day Registrations to access the office. This is the only office that is occupied on Election Day.

Moving the deadline for Same/Late Day Registrations to 5:00 pm on the Friday before Election Day would give our election staff time to compile accurate registers, give us the time on Election Day to assist the public with their election concerns, and greatly reduce the security risk to election employees and materials.

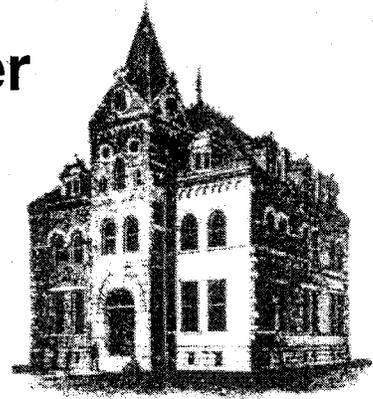
We believe HB 281 is a workable compromise, and respectfully ask that you consider voting in its favor.

Thank you,
Pauline M. Mishler
Clerk & Recorder

MAR 8 - 2007

Jefferson County
Clerk and Recorder

P. O. Box H
Boulder, Montana 59632



Bonnie Ramey
County Clerk and Recorder
Carla Matlack
Deputy

Senate State Administration Committee
Honorable Carolyn Squires, Chairman
Capitol Station
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Members of the Committee:

For the record my name is Bonnie Ramey, Jefferson County Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator. I am writing to urge you to support HB281, which closes late registration at 5:00 p.m. the Friday before election.

I support this bill for the following reasons:

*It is not eliminating late registration, it is merely rolling it back 17 voting hours.

*Accuracy on results is a necessity on election day. We are not expected to be close. We must be perfect! This county had a close legislative race last November. After a recount, the candidates were separated by 87 votes. We must be able to assure every candidate and the public that the number of ballots issued balances to the number of ballots counted. It is absolutely critical that we have the time on election day to process and balance all absentee ballots and work closely with our polling place judges to ensure that all **registered** electors are able to vote.

*All 56 Clerk and Recorders/Election Administrators, who are not united in party affiliation or ideology, believe in elections being as accessible as possible but we must be able to maintain the integrity of the process. Passage of this bill will help us to do our job right. **All 56 of us are united in support of this bill.**

Thank you for considering my position.

Sincerely,

Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator



Wheatland County

PO Box 1903

Harlowton, Montana 59036-1903

MAR 9 - 2007

Phone (406) 632-4891

FAX (406) 632-4880

COMMISSIONERS:

Tom Bennett
David Miller
Richard Moe

MARY E. MILLER, *Clerk and Recorder*

March 7, 2007

State Senate Administration Committee

Members of the Committee:

As the Election Administrator of Wheatland County I would like to submit this letter in support of HB 281. I feel that rolling back late registration 17 voting hours will help protect what I feel are the most important components of an election, integrity and accuracy. Voters could help us immensely by taking on a small amount of responsibility to be registered in a timely fashion so we could focus on the rest of the process. We will still have the most open voting laws in the nation.

Respectfully,

Mary Miller
Wheatland County
Election Administrator & Clerk and Recorder



MAR 9 - 2007

**SHERIDAN
COUNTY**

**CLERK AND RECORDER
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

MAR 9 2007

100 West Laurel Avenue
Plentywood MT 59254-1699

406.765.3403
406.765.2609 Fax
record_supt@co.sheridan.mt.us
www.co.sheridan.mt.us

June A. Johnson

March 7, 2007

Members of the Committee
Senate State Administration Committee

Dear Members,

Sheridan County Election Administrator, Mary Lynch, and I would like to see HB281 pass and the late registration deadline rolled back until Friday at 5:00 before Election Day.

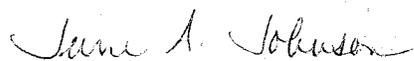
We want to see as many citizens as possible participate in the voting process and think the process needs to be as convenient as possible for voters. But, at the same time, we want to ensure that each vote is being treated respectfully and with the value it deserves. The integrity of the election is of primary concern to us and being able to run the registers over the weekend would help a lot toward that goal.

We also want to see that our workers at the polling places (who are essentially volunteers) feel valued and secure. We want to be sure that we are available to help them if they ask us to.

Quite honestly, Sheridan County didn't have much go wrong in November. We had worried about it before hand because we could see how problems could develop and weren't how to best prepare. We aren't sure how to prepare for the next time either even though we've been through it once. Listening to some of the things that happened in other counties, didn't ease our minds much!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

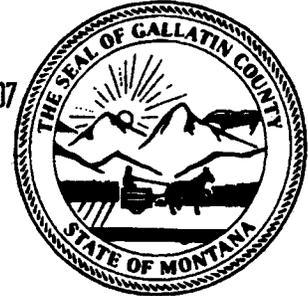


June A. Johnson

State of Montana

County of Gallatin

MAR 9 - 2007



Bozeman

March 8, 2007

Please Support HB 281

Gallatin County was one of the counties in Montana that was greatly affected by the late registration law during the November 6, 2006 General Election. We had voters in line, out the door of the Courthouse, and down the block from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. when the sheriff's deputies herded everyone inside our Courthouse. We could not release any results from our counts because we were a polling place, and voters were voting until just before midnight that night.

On Election Day, our Election Office staff is usually able to concentrate on helping our judges at the polling place by being available to answer their questions, and if necessary make runs to the polling places to help. However, the people who would normally have been on the phones answering the polling place judges' questions were at the counters registering late voters and issuing their ballots. The polling places, where people who chose to be responsible, register to vote in time to have their name listed in the register, and vote, received less than desirable service.

Because we could not tell how many people would be participating in the late registration process, we had to estimate the number of ballots to keep in our office for voting and the number to send to the polling places. To add to the confusion of the day, we had voters in the office who had to wait until we could go to the polling place and bring back more ballots. We also had some polling places where the turn out was so great that voters had to wait while we delivered more ballots because we had kept too many ballots in the office for the late voters.

The election process has become so complicated that we can no longer have a few temporary people come in and help us for a day. The people needed to help in the office have to be trained to operate our computers and use our software application. These people need to be in our office at least two months before the election so they can gain the experience needed to register voters, issue ballots, receive ballots, and just answer questions on the phone.

We have to find a new level of temporary employee who is willing to work for two months and then be fired for the next 6 months. By then we either have to retrain everyone or find new people who will come in and work. In the past, so many of our volunteers have been retired people whose average age is probably around 72 years old. It is just too technical and too stressful for them and many of the people who have enjoyed volunteering for years, just don't want to help any more.

Also, the expense to the counties is very high. To meet the volume, we need to have several extra computers, data connections, software licenses, and telephones because each person that answers the phone or helps someone at the counter has to have a computer. Plus we need the room to set up extra stations so that we can process more those two or three late registrants at a time.

The integrity of the process needs to be protected. The responsible voter who has chosen to go to the polling place needs to be protected as well. The voter who is registering and voting at the last minute is given priority and that takes resources and attention away from those people who have planned ahead, registered to vote, and chose to vote at the polling places.

Please support HB 281.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlotte Mills".

Charlotte Mills
Election Administrator
Clerk & Recorder
Gallatin County

**BLAINE COUNTY
CLERK AND RECORDER
SANDRA L. BOARDMAN**

MAR 9 - 2007

**P. O. Box 278
Chinook, MT 59523-0278
(406) 357-3240
(406) 357-2199 Fax**

March 7, 2007

RE: House Bill 281

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

This letter is in support of House Bill 281. I am in total support of late registration, but opposed to late registration on Election Day. I would like to see the late registration moved back to the Friday before the election which would roll back voting hours 17 hours.

We have always held our elections with the highest integrity and the necessity of accuracy on Election Day. Late registration on Election Day caused both of these items to be questioned.

I have seven of my eleven precincts that are located 25 to 60 miles from the courthouse. There were some problems on Election Day at one of those precincts that required me to travel out to that precinct. I was held up at the office due to registering a late registrant which delayed me from getting to this precinct as quickly as I should have. When my election judges call for assistance I have to be available to assist them. Election judges work twice every other year and they cannot and should not have to handle the difficult questions without administrative support from me.

If late registration closed on the Friday before the election, I would then print my official register (the official list of electors at the precinct) over the weekend. In doing so, the official register would be an accurate and complete list of who is entitled to go to the polls and vote. We would then be able to count all ballots on election night and give out complete results. In November, the late registrants that moved from county to county and precinct to precinct were considered as a provisional ballot and we were not able to verify and count their ballots for a couple of days after the election.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Sandra L. Boardman
Blaine County Clerk & Recorder/Election Administrator

MUSSELSHELL COUNTY

MAR 12 2007

LARRY G. LEKSE
MIKE KILBY
SUE M. OLSON
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
506 Main Street
323-1104
JANE E. MANG
CLERK & RECORDER
506 Main Street
323-1104
FAX 323-3303
MARY C. NELSON
TREASURER
SUPT. OF SCHOOLS
ASSESSOR
506 Main Street
323-2504



WOODROW WEITZEL
SHERIFF
CORONER
820 Main Street
Fax 323-2566
323-1402
KENT M. SIPE
COUNTY ATTORNEY
506 Main Street
Fax 323-3458
323-2230
CONNIE MATTFIELD
CLERK OF DISTRICT COURT
506 Main Street
Fax 323-1710
323-1413
DONNA M. MARSH
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
P.O. Box 660
323-1078

ROUNDUP, MONTANA 59072

The Honorable Chairman Carolyn Squires and members of the Committee
Senate Administration Committee

RE: HB 281

I support HB281 - closing late registration at 5 p.m. Friday before the election.

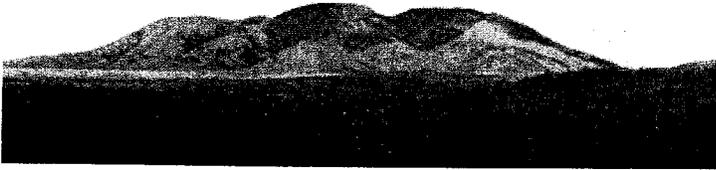
I feel that late registration on election day is an integrity issue. By pushing back late registration to 5 p.m. on Friday it eliminates that chance of someone voting twice. We **are not** trying to eliminate late registration just pushing it back a few hours. On Election Day, the Election Administrators want accuracy and perfection for each and every election they do. Late registration on election day divides our attention and prevents us from properly administering elections. When 56 Clerk & Recorders and Election Administrators are all in agreement and support HB 281 it shows that this is not a partisan issue.

I also feel that a voter should shoulder a small amount of responsibility and register before election day. It is frustrating to the late voters when they show up at the polls and are then sent to the Courthouse to register. Voters want to come in, vote and leave. Late registration on election day is a time consuming process. **Please support HB 281.**

Sincerely,

Jane E. Mang
Musselshell County Clerk & Recorder & Election Administrator
506 Main Street
Roundup, MT 59072

Liberty County



Clerk & Records Office
P.O. Box 459
Chester, Montana 59522

Phone: 759-5365 Fax: 759-5395
Email: clerk@co.liberty.mt.gov

Rhonda S. Pimley, Clerk & Recorder

Charlotte Kenfield, Deputy

Cyndee L. Fraser, Clerk

March 9, 2007

House Bill 281

Elections are cornerstone to our democratic representative form of government. In political theory, the authority of the government in democracies derives solely from the consent of the governed. The principal mechanism for translating that consent into governmental authority is the holding of free and *fair* elections; elections in which *great care* must be taken.

The General Election of 2006 made clear that allowing registration on Election Day creates chaos that endangers the integrity of our elections. There were unprecedented lines at the courthouses – lines ranging from a half hour up to four hours or more. Voting continued until midnight in one location, delaying results of the election.

Same day registration allows a greater opportunity for both mistakes and for fraud. There already exists, among the voters, a growing concern regarding the accuracy and dependability of election results, and same day registration only gives these voters greater reason for skepticism. In an election where the margin in a race is very tight, there will be many *legitimate* questions about how accurately the election was conducted. It is imperative that we give our election administrators the tools they need to ensure that they can certify the results of their elections. Certainly it is evident that this election process, and the need for certifying the accuracy is every bit as important as the need to increase voter turn out.

It is also important to keep in mind that House Bill 281 does not eliminate late registration, but merely rolls it back 17 voting hours. With permanent absentee, no-excuse absentee voting and late registration we will still have the *most* open voting laws in the nation even if late registration is moved off of Election Day.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, there are 56 clerks and election administrators that have been elected by their constituents to do a job. A job that they take every bit as seriously as the Senators and Representatives of this great state take theirs. All 56 of us are united in the belief that rolling back late registration is the right thing to do for all of the citizens of Montana. It is my humble opinion, that when the Montana Senators and Representatives are considering changes that effect elections, they should consider *seriously* the opinions of the also *elected* Election Administrators of this state.

Sincerely,

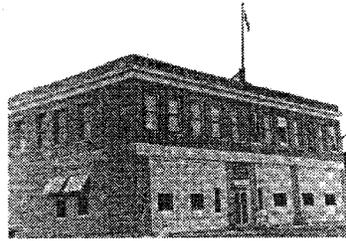
Rhonda S Pimley

Liberty County Clerk & Recorder & Election Administrator

Board of County
Commissioners
Lloyd N. Rowton, Chairman
J. Chris King
Lee Iverson

Lisa A. Solf
County Manager
Treasurer, Assessor
Phone 429-5551

Monte J. Boettger
County Attorney
Phone 429-5311
538-8127



MAR 12 2007

Donna M. Lund
Justice of the Peace
Phone 429-5311

Mary L. Brindley
Clerk and Recorder
Clerk of Court
Phone 429-5311

Glen C. Gillett
Sheriff
Phone 429-6551

R.J. (Dick) Brown
Coroner
Phone 538-8711

COUNTY OF PETROLEUM

P.O. Box 226
201 East Main
Winnett, Montana 59087

COUNTY FAX 429-6328

March 8, 2007

Carolyn Squires, Chairman
Members of the Committee
Senate State Administration Committee

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This letter is being written on behalf of the Petroleum County Commissioners and myself, as Clerk and Recorder/Election Administrator, asking your support for HB 281. After having same day registration during the 2006 election, we believe it does not allow election personnel adequate time to determine if the voter is entitled to vote in our county. There is the possibility a person would have enough time to drive to neighboring counties, vote, and repeat the procedure in several counties on election day. This could certainly jeopardize the integrity of the election process.

In a small county there is also the issue of a voter's secrecy being violated if the ballots are held and certified after election day.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Brindley
Clerk and Recorder

FERGUS COUNTY CLERK AND RECORDER

712 W MAIN

LEWISTOWN MT 59457

(406)538-5242

Fax (406)538-9023

MAR 12 2007

Kathy A. Fleharty
Clerk & Recorder
Election Administrator

Rana J. Wichman
Deputy Clerk & Recorder
Accounting Clerk
Elections Clerk

Kim Manseau
Recording Clerk
Elections Clerk

Sheila Hendrickson
Elections Clerk
Recording Clerk

March 5, 2007

Members of the Committee

Senate State Administration Committee

Honorable Senators Squires, Balyeat, Cocchiarella, Essman, Gallus, Jent, Laible, Laslovich,
Lewis, Shockley, Tropilia

Support for HB 281

Dear Honorable Senators;

As Fergus County Clerk and Reorder, I am requesting your support of HB281, the bill which will allow me to regain that portion of our election process that I, and my office staff, found to cause us uncertainty in the 2006 General Election.

Allowing for individuals to register and vote on Election Day, after the registers have been produced and sent to the polls, allows for the election process to fall under additional questionability. Perhaps the individuals are registered in an adjoining County, perhaps they are intent on causing the process to be tainted, perhaps they are deliberately wanting to affect the election perhaps they are college students who have already requested an absentee ballot.

Fergus County has about 8500 registered voters, 6 polling places, and 16 precincts. I, we, need to be certain that our voters, as well as the candidates, are confident that we have provided them the greatest opportunity to cast a knowledgeable vote. In allowing them the additional time, until Friday at 5:00PM before Election Day, expands the registration process for them, and allows me time to accurately record my registrations and absentee votes.

Voting is a privilege that should not be taken lightly. It is but one area of my position that I take great pride in providing to our County. I would appreciate your support of House Bill 281 and in helping me to regain the confidence of the process of voter registration.

Thank you for your support,



Kathy A. Fleharty
Fergus County Clerk & Recorder/Election Administrator

**CYNDY R. MAXWELL
BIG HORN COUNTY
ELECTION ADMINISTRATOR
PO BOX 908**

HARDIN, MT 59034

Phone (406)665-9731 Fax (406)665-9738 Email cmaxwell@co.bighorn.mt.us

March 9, 2007

Senate State Administration Committee
Members of the Committee

RE: HB 281

Dear Committee Members:

To begin with, I would like to thank you all for taking the time to read and address my concerns regarding the above mentioned House Bill.

I have been an Election Administrator for Big Horn County since 1995. Legislation spanning the last 10 years, from both the Federal and State levels, have resulted in sweeping changes to election laws that election administrators across the country have scrambled to implement.

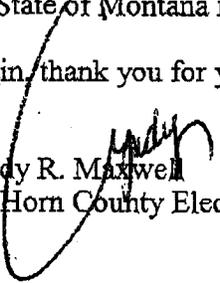
One of the new laws that adversely affected the 2006 General Election was Late Registration on Election Day. This law can be fixed by simply moving the late registration deadline to the Friday preceding election day. This will eliminate the problems each of us experienced on Election Day ranging from long lines at our counters to lack of time necessary to provide support for my election judges or responsibly registered voters.

Specifically, by establishing Friday as the deadline, my office could identify which provisional ballots cast could be counted and sent through on election day like all other ballots. In November, those that were county to county registrations or county within county registrations, were held until the following Monday to be opened and tallied. My Justice of the Peace candidate race was separated by 9 votes after the ballots were sent through the counter on election night. Those candidates had to wait another week to find out the results. In the mean time, the Justice of Peace one week training (required by law) falls on the Saturday following the election. Obviously this presented a problem to both the incumbent (she didn't want to go if she was not the winner) and her opponent (should the County pay to send him if with the chance that he would not be the successful candidate).

Additionally, with Friday being the deadline, all the registers could be ran during the following weekend. Each precinct register would then correctly identify which voters are legally eligible to vote and which voters have already been issued a ballot. This simple change would make huge strides towards insuring the integrity of all elections.

This is not partisan legislation. I strongly urge the committee members to support all 56 election administrators of the State of Montana in the passing of House Bill 281.

Again, thank you for your consideration.


Cyndy R. Maxwell
Big Horn County Election Administrator

PHILLIPS COUNTY

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

TROY BLUNT
RICHARD DUNBAR
LESLEY ROBINSON

CLERK & RECORDER

LAUREL N HINES

TREASURER/ASSESSOR

JEAN MAVENCAMP

SHERIFF/CORONER

THOMAS K MILLER



CLERK OF COURT

IRIS ROBINSON

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

VIVIAN TAYLOR

COUNTY ATTORNEY

EDWARD A AMESTOY

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

GAYLE STAHL

DISTRICT JUDGE

JOHN C. McKEON

PO BOX 360, MALTA MT 59538

March 12, 2007

THE HONORABLE SENATORS
STATE OF MONTANA
PO BOX 200500
HELENA MT 59620-0500

Re: SUPPORT OF HB 281

Dear Honorable Senators:

I would like to urge your support of HB 281. This bill will enable the Election Administrators in Montana to maintain the integrity of the election process in a professional manner. This process was definitely in question when voter registration was allowed up to 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Passage of this bill will help maintain the accuracy and integrity of elections in Montana while still maintaining the most open voting laws in the nation.

I ask that you support HB 281 as it now reads.

Thank you.

Phillips County
Clerk & Recorder/Election Administrator

Laurel N Hines

Laurel N. Hines